

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

enforcing a charging policy at a network element, wherein the charging policy is to be applied to ~~data packets~~a data flow reaching the network element during a packet data protocol context, the packet data protocol context comprising a plurality of data flows including the data flow, with each data flow of the plurality of data flows being distinguishable by a set of flow parameters, wherein said charging policy defines charging rules for the data flow per flow of the plurality of flows;

observing the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including at least one flow parameter, wherein the at least one flow parameter includes a flow identifier, and wherein the at least one flow parameter indicates ~~an associated flow~~the charging policy to be enforced on ~~for the data flow~~;

detecting ~~at least one~~the data flow from flow parameters included in the ~~observed~~ data packets;

mapping the data packets to ~~detected~~the data flows in accordance with the at least one flow parameter included in ~~the~~a respective data packet;

matching ~~detected~~the data flows to ~~an~~enforced~~the~~ charging policy; and

applying said ~~enforced~~ charging policy to said data flows to generate charging information.

2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

causing ~~said~~the generated charging information to be forwarded to a charging system of ~~the~~a communication network.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the enforcing is performed upon start-up of the network element.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the enforcing is performed upon activation of the packet data protocol context.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein the enforcing is performed dynamically during a life-time of the packet data protocol context.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising: initializing data volume counters upon enforcing said charging policy.

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of data flows of the packet data protocol context are Internet Protocol (IP) based packet data flows, and said flow parameters comprise at least one of an IP header field, a transport header field, and an application level information.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said charging policy comprises at least one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising: creating a plurality of charging policies including the charging policy to be enforced, each charging policy of the plurality of charging policies comprising at least the one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication; selecting athe charging policy based on offered services and subscriber information; and causing saidthe selectedcharging policy to be distributed to at least onethe network element to be enforced at saidat least onethe network element for charging of data reaching saidat least one network element during the packet data protocol context.

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 9, wherein said charging policy is selected for a type of said network element.

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising a processor configured to cause the apparatus to:

enforce a charging policy at a network element to be applied to adataflowpackets reaching the network element during a packet data protocol context, the packet data protocol

context comprising a plurality of data flows including the data flow, with each data flows of the plurality of data flows being distinguishable by a set of flow parameters, wherein said charging policy defines charging rules per data flow of the plurality of data flows;

observe said data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including at least one flow parameter, wherein the at least one flow parameter includes a flow identifier, and wherein the at least one flow parameter indicates an associated flowthe charging policy to be enforced on for the data flow;

detect at least onethe data flow from flow parameters included in the observed-data packets;

map the data packets to detectedthe data flows in accordance with the at least one flow parameter included in thea respective data packet;

match saidthe detected-data flows to anenforcedthe charging policy;

apply said enforced-charging policy to said data flows; and

generate charging information, in response to applying said enforced-charging policy.

12. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the apparatus to cause saidthe generated charging information to be forwarded to a charging system of thea communication network.

13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to enforce the charging policy is further configured to cause the apparatus to be responsive to a start-up of the network element to perform the enforcing.

14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to enforce the charging policy is further configured to cause the apparatus to be responsive to activation of the packet data protocol context to perform the enforcing.

15. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to enforce the charging policy is further configured

to cause the apparatus to dynamically enforce during a life-time of the packet data protocol context.

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the apparatus to initialize data volume counters and/or time counters responsive to enforcing said charging policy.

17. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said plurality of data flows of the packet data protocol context are Internet Protocol (IP) based packet data flows, and said flow parameters comprise at least one of an IP header field, a transport header field, and an application level information.

18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said charging policy comprises at least one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication.

19. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the apparatus to:

create a plurality of charging policies including the charging policy to be enforced, each charging policy of the plurality of charging policies comprising at least the one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication;

select a the charging policy based on offered services and subscriber information; and cause the selected charging policy to be distributed to at least one said network element, with the charging policy to be enforced at said at least one network element for charging of data reaching said at least one network element during a packet data protocol context.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said charging policy is selected for a type of said network element.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

enforcing means configured to enforce a charging policy at a network element to be applied to a data flow packets reaching the network element during a packet data protocol context, the packet data protocol context comprising a plurality of data flows including the data flow, with each data flow of the plurality of data flows being distinguishable by a set of flow parameters, wherein said charging policy defines charging rules for the per-data flow of the plurality of flows;

observation means configured to observe said data packets reaching said network element, the data packets each including at least one flow parameter, wherein the at least one flow parameter includes a flow identifier, and wherein the at least one flow parameter indicates an associated flow the charging policy to be enforced on for the data flow, the observation means being further configured to detect at least one the data flow from flow parameters included in the observed data packets,

mapping means configured to map each of the data packets to detected the data flows in accordance with the at least one flow parameter included in the a respective data packet;

matching means configured to match said detected data flows to an enforced the charging policy;

application means configured to apply said enforced charging policy to said data flows; and

generation means, responsive to said application means, configured to generate charging information.

22.-24. (Cancelled)

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein observing the data packets includes observing the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including the at least one flow parameter, the at least one flow parameter including a flow identifier and a destination address, wherein the flow identifier does not include the destination address.

26. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to observe the data packets includes being configured to cause the apparatus to observe the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including the at least one flow parameter, the at least one flow parameter including a flow identifier and a destination address, wherein the flow identifier does not include the destination address.

27. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the observation means configured to observe the data packets includes being configured to observe the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including the at least one flow parameter, the at least one flow parameter including a flow identifier and a destination address, wherein the flow identifier does not include the destination address.

28. (New) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
selecting the charging policy based on the at least one flow parameter, including the flow identifier, of the data packets; and
metering of the data packets of the data flow to generate a flow record comprising information about the data flow;
wherein applying said charging policy includes applying said charging policy to the flow record to generate the charging information for the data flow.

29. (New) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the apparatus to:
select the charging policy based on the at least one flow parameter, including the flow identifier, of the data packets; and
meter the data packets of the data flow to generate a flow record comprising information about the data flow; and
wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to apply said charging policy includes being configured to cause the apparatus to apply said charging policy to the flow record to generate the charging information for the data flow.

30. (New) The apparatus according to claim 21, further comprising:
means for selecting the charging policy based on the at least one flow parameter,
including the flow identifier, of the data packets; and
means for metering of the data packets of the data flow to generate a flow record
comprising information about the data flow;
wherein the application means configured to apply said charging policy includes being
configured to apply said charging policy to the flow record to generate the charging information
for the data flow.